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**The Iowa Blind History Archive
History of Blindness in Iowa - Oral History Project
Interview with [Name]
Conducted by [Name]
[Date]
Transcribed by [Name]**

NOTE: Any text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

**Doris Moritz, Council Bluffs, Iowa
Mike Hicklin
1400 Franklin Avenue, Council Bluffs, Iowa
8-4-2011**

(Beginning of Recording 1)

Mike Hicklin: Okay, this morning we're interviewing Doris Moritz, who lives at 1400 Franklin Avenue, Council Bluffs,

Iowa. The location of the interview is Doris's apartment. This is Thursday, August 4, it's about 11:00 a.m. My name is Mike Hicklin. Doris and I became friends probably around 1978-79, somewhere in there, when I was a new staff member at the Department, as the Rehab. Counselor assuming Dave Quick's territory in Southwest Iowa. Doris was operating the Courthouse Cafeteria at the time and was just a tremendously positive influence on helping me get started, and so we've been friends ever since. The purpose of this interview is--this interview is part of the Iowa Department for the Blind's History of Blindness, Oral History Project. Doris, do I have your oral consent to have the interview recorded?

Doris Moritz: Yes, you do.

1:37

(End of Recording 1)

(Beginning of Recording 2)

Hicklin: Okay, Doris, let's go ahead and start.

Moritz: Okay. How far back shall we go? Like, my birth in Southern Illinois to a mother and father, who were both blind. My mother was totally blind. My father was a partial. We moved to Wisconsin. My mother died from burns that were written up in the newspaper as horrendous, since she was blind, you know, how they did things in the 1930's. Anyway, I started school...I actually tried to go to public school, and they immediately sent me to Janesville, Wisconsin to the School for the Blind. I went there for six

years through the fifth grade. During that time I had several surgeries at The University of Wisconsin, and they decided I could see well enough to go to public school. At the same time, we moved to Nashville, Tennessee, into kind of a rough part of town, because of my dad's vocation. And, I really got tormented because the teacher used large chalk on the chalkboard, and made quite a deal out of the fact that I couldn't see. And, those were probably the times I started learning to hide the fact that I couldn't see.

I don't know who I was fooling, because my glasses were horrendously thick, and I always tell my kids as they were growing up, be careful what you wish for; you might get it. Because my biggest dream as a child was, "Oh God, I don't want to have to wear these glasses." Well, I'd love to be able to wear them now if they'd help me see.

So, anyway, I continued going through school. Never did...we moved up to Kentucky after that, and I just always tried to find a seat where the light was at my back, and I was close enough to the chalkboard. I missed a few things once in a while, but tried to hide the fact that I couldn't see very well.

Hicklin: We're talking about back in the 30's or early 40's?

Moritz: Now we're in the 40's.

Hicklin: Long before assistive technology.

Moritz: Oh, absolutely. I remember the move to Nashville was in 1945. We had VE Day or something right after that. I went to two different schools in the East end and West end of Kentucky. We moved then to Florida, where I finished

high school. I remember, I didn't graduate with the rest of the seniors. I had been able to type since I was nine years old, and I was a good typist. And, of all things, I failed typing in this high school, because I had to sit in a seat where I was facing the window, and I couldn't copy...couldn't see what I was doing, and I don't know if I tried to tell the teacher this or, if I just thought I could pass anyway. But, those were the days, again, now we're talking 1952, at that time, and I still was trying to hide the fact. I did have to go to summer school to make up my typing, and I made sure to get my back against the window so that I could see what I was copying. Stupid isn't it?

Hicklin: One of those life experiences.

Moritz: Yes.

Hicklin: That we learn from.

Moritz: I tried then to get jobs. Going to college was not even an option for me. I didn't think I was college material. I am kind of smart, but I don't think...I thought so then. Anyway, I tried to get several jobs. The insurance companies, the telephone company all required physicals, and I could never pass the eye test, even though I could always pass all the rest of the tests they gave me. I remember one insurance company you had to copy down numbers by memory, and they would test you to see can you retain 10, 12, 14 numbers, and then turn around and repeat those numbers. And I was very good at everything. And, then I would get to the eye test, and that would be the end of that job. So, I finally found a job at the Florida National

Bank, where they didn't require a physical, and I did very good there.

But in the meantime, I met my husband. We moved to North Africa at the time. I lost a couple of babies, but we finally had my oldest daughter now, Karen. We had come back to the states, and she was born in Florida. We did find out that she had congenital cataracts. Now, I forgot to tell you, my dad's surgery all came out well. He was able to drive. He had good vision, he wore glasses and contacts. But, so, I never knew the difference between, you know, why his turned out so well and mine didn't. But, I also didn't know at that time that my mother had Stickler's syndrome, which is quite complicated. I'll get to that later, if you'll remind me.

So, I had Karen, who turned out to have cataracts, and she had several surgeries. We moved a couple of times after she was born...ended up in New Jersey. My husband's office was in the hangar where the Hindenburg was kept; in this blimp hangar, which is a huge hangar. And, that's where Karen started school. Well, they didn't want to take her into public school. They insisted on sending her to the school for the blind, and I insisted over my dead body; having had experience at the schools for the blind. Now, this is the part that might make some people angry, but having had that experience, it was great, it was fun. I was kind of a big-wig there, because I had some eyesight, and everybody didn't have any, you know. So, those of us that could see better were kind of, you know, lorded it over those that couldn't see at all. Doesn't that speak well of me?

Hicklin: It speaks a lot about the age.

Moritz: But, I was determined that Karen was not going to go through that somehow or other. Being taken away from my family was traumatic. And so, we took a trip to Trenton. She took some tests. I did some protesting. I'm not even sure who all I talked to at that time, but I was quite an angry mother. And she went into public school, and she just did fine. That was kindergarten, and she just did fine. She got on the wrong school bus one day, and everybody panicked, but then we finally found her, and that turned out okay. We then moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and lived out in the country. That was my husband's doing, because we had to stay back in New Jersey, after he got his orders. He was still in the military at the time, and Karen, John, and I stayed in New Jersey to sell the house, and then Karen could finish school. So, when we moved out here, it was in the country, and Karen started school at Lewis Central. John started kindergarten there. You know what, we need to back up, because Karen went to kindergarten and first grade both in New Jersey. Yeah.

Hicklin: Okay.

Moritz: And so, John and Karen both went to Lewis Central, and not a word was ever said about her being in the classroom with the rest. Her teacher was just absolutely marvelous, and she did well; got good grades. But I insisted on moving into town, where there was public transportation.

Hicklin: Is Lewis Central like a school in the suburb here?

Moritz: It's out of the city limits, and so. And we lived outside the city limits, so it's I guess that's under the county wouldn't it be?

Hicklin: Possibly.

Moritz: You know Mike, I've never thought of that before. I just know it's not part of the Council Bluffs Public School District.

Hicklin: Yeah.

Moritz: So, I really don't know. But, then when we moved into town, she had to go to a city school, and all the time I was not working. I had been a stay-at-home mother. And, I had done a lot of volunteer work. In New Jersey I had volunteered at a hospital. That's where I usually did my volunteer work, was in hospitals as pink ladies; that's what we were there, or, well, that's the only thing I've ever been was a pink lady...having any clue where I was.

Hicklin: Is a pink lady something, like, what they call candy stripers now?

Moritz: Yes. Well, the candy stripers are the kids.

Hicklin: Okay.

Moritz: The pink ladies are the ones that pass around books and, well, they do the same things.

Hicklin: Volunteers.

Moritz: Yeah, they're volunteers.

Hicklin: Okay, we had...Karen has just come into school in Council Bluffs, is kind of where we were.

Moritz: Oh, yes. They weren't going to let her go to attend the regular school. The recommendation was either special Ed. or the school for the blind in Vinton. Now, Karen is a very bright child, and you already have heard how I feel about a school for the blind, whether it be in Vinton or Wisconsin or New Jersey. There's not going to be that, and I certainly wasn't going to put her in special Ed. We had some testing done with the school district; what do they call it? The statewide, I don't know, maybe you'd better stop that a minute, Mike.

Hicklin: The Area Education perhaps?

Moritz: Yes, thanks. And, she was sent to a psychologist, because one of the things was that she got frustrated, and everything came out fine there as far as they were concerned. Well, that didn't win many battles just because they figured out she wasn't retarded, or they still felt she ought to go to Vinton. So, I called the Department for the Blind for the first time in Des Moines, and a wonderful guy named Dave Quick, came out to talk to me. And he explained to me that the Department dealt with adults only, but he would certainly help me say the right things, and do the right things, and talk to the right people. And he did. He had my back, so to speak. And, we got Karen into regular class at Tinley. At the end of that school year, the teacher

made a point of thanking me for making such a fuss, because Karen had been a joy to have in her class. We never had any trouble after that, and she went through the school system. I don't know what she, personally, put up with, but during that time...Should I stay with Karen for a while, or go back to myself? Karen has since, with not necessarily financial, but...

15:00

Moritz: Well, as soon as she got out of high school she went to the Department as a student in the Adult Orientation Center, and they helped put her on the right track there, as far as having some...using the long white cane was one helpful thing, and then living with the vision that she does have. They helped quite a bit with attitude, but she kind of already had a positive attitude. I think her mother might have helped in that. I remember one of my friends...I had a Girl Scout Troop, and one of the other mothers in the troop just couldn't believe that I would do that to her, make her use a white cane. She said, "Why would you do that to her?" Anyway, Karen after that got her bachelor's degree at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, I believe.

Hicklin: Yes.

Moritz: With encouragement from some of her Counselors there, and I believe it was still Dave; yes it was, because Dave actually moved her physically to Coe. I had gotten divorced by then, and Ken was living somewhere else. And, bless Dave's heart, he packed up his car and moved her to Cedar Rapids from the Orientation Center. So, after Coe,

with everybody's encouragement, she got scholarships at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. It was almost like full circle. Princeton is not too far from Toms River, where she started school. And she ends up getting her...the next degree up.

Hicklin: Her master's or doctorate?

Moritz: Yes, thank you, master's. Yeah, she got her master's degree from Princeton. It took her several years of working and going to seminary out in California, but just two years...No, last year she got her Doctorate of Ministry degree; or DMin as they're called. So, this is the child they tried to put in special ed., I always say.

Hicklin: Sounds like she's done well for herself.

Moritz: She has. She's had several churches, has worked in several hospitals as chaplain, and she was trying to become supervisor there. But, it kind of has that white male mentality, and she just finally gave up on that. She wasn't getting where she needed to be. Right now, she is an emissary in Prague, Czech Republic. And don't ask what that means, other than I hear her greeting and meeting a lot of people as a representative of the protestant church that kind of ties in between the Czech Republic and the United States.

Hicklin: Is she there on an assignment for several years, or?

Moritz: Yes, it's a three-year assignment through the head Presbytery. So, she's working hard on the language. It's not an easy language.

Hicklin: Probably not.

Moritz: But, I think she also forgot that as you get older, second languages don't come that easy either, no matter what they are. She's doing well.

Hicklin: Would it be worth telling that you have a chance to talk to her oftentimes daily through the computer?

Moritz: I do. I talk to her almost every day on Skype, when it's working well. We get to see each other and talk to each other. We have periodic problems, but. And this is a week I have not been able to talk to her, because she's out in some godforsaken town in the Czech Republic that doesn't have any Wi-Fi. And her hostess computer, for some reason I'm not getting the audio that well. But it's nice to be able to talk to her. It would have been nice, when she was younger and in New Jersey. She actually got ordained in Florida. Again, talk about cycles. You know, here she was born in Florida, and then she gets ordained in Florida.

Hicklin: That's neat.

Moritz: Hmmm?

Hicklin: That's neat.

Moritz: It is, isn't it?

Hicklin: Yes.

Moritz: Yes, and the first church that she got, that's sponsoring her, is also from Florida. Things tie together sometimes. But, a lot of those years we couldn't even afford phone calls very often, and here now, it is thanks to Skype, which is free. We get to talk every day and see each other.

Hicklin: And she's a half a world away.

Moritz: Yes.

Hicklin: Yeah, it's amazing.

Moritz: Yes. There's a seven hour difference, so it's usually in the evening after she's home, and that's sort of in the middle of my day. So, that's Karen's life. It goes on. She still is legally blind, but is able to read large print and does not use much assistive technology, but she knows what's there if she needs it.

Hicklin: Yes.

Moritz: And, that's good.

Hicklin: And, she'll make use of whatever she needs to get the job done.

Moritz: Yes. Now, getting back to my being a housewife. After the kids were both in school, I decided to go back to work. I was a little anxious about it, because I had not

worked in many years, even though I had done volunteer work, I had not actually worked in an office. I had worked for the Navy when I was overseas. And as I said, I worked at a bank, but I knew that machines had changed. Electric typewriters had come into being at the time, and the calculators were different. I decided to go to Iowa Western to catch up on, what I thought at the time, was the new technology. And, yeah, if you'd never used one, an IBM Selectric typewriter was kind of daunting. They were hard for someone like me to do corrections with, because the IBM Selectric does not use the same space for every letter. Therefore, an "M" takes up more room than an "I." And so, if you don't see very well and you need to backspace and whiteout something or strikeout, or whatever, you can't just automatically go back three spaces and know that you're exactly on the right letter. So, that's kind of a challenge, which a lot of people probably never thought about.

Hicklin: I certainly never knew it.

Moritz: Yeah, yeah. So, give me the old typewriter that every letter takes the same amount of space.

Hicklin: Yes.

Moritz: At that time, I was hired by my pediatrician here in town, which had always been what I wanted to do, was to work in a doctor's office. I had done volunteer work in hospitals. Well, I actually forgot that I was physically working at a hospital while I was pregnant with Karen; at Seminole Memorial Hospital in Sanford, Florida. I worked there for about 10 months, I think. And that was quite a

challenge, because it was the front office, and I was doing everything. Those were the old days when you had to post the daily charges with the posting machine, answer the switchboard, and those were the old plug-in switchboards. It was after hours, if you worked 3:00 to 11:00 you had to go answer the emergency room door, believe it or not.

Hicklin: My goodness.

Moritz: And decide who to call, whether it was really an emergency or somebody just had a bellyache, so, anyway. But, I had wanted to work in a doctor's office, and then Dr. Bean hired me. I was just thrilled. Well, then all of a sudden I had a detached retina in my good eye, which was the only eye I could read out of at the time, and we were not able to save that. And so, there went my job with Dr. Bean. I thought, maybe, with anybody, but with Dave's encouragement...

Oh, at that time, I was...I had become active with the local support group. Oh, don't call it a support group. It was a consumer group of blind people that met here in town on a monthly basis, and they were mostly younger people that were active. And, it gave me a feeling of having other people to talk to, you know, in a positive way. At that time, we did not belong to any national group. I can't remember how this group got started, but there was some strong leadership in it, and they all eventually fizzled out. After we decided to join a national group at that time it was the NFB, National Federation of the Blind. We had, usually, at our meetings 20-25 people, and it was quite an active group at the time. But, my vision improved enough that I tried to go back to work again, and I went to work at the Omaha

National Bank having had banking experience. I got the job easily, but I was on my 90-day trial and my boss discovered I couldn't see very well. As I've said previously, I kind of never advertised that. At this time, yet, I still was more or less hiding the fact I couldn't see, but my job involved reading checks and entering the amounts. And people's handwriting is pretty bad. I called Dave from the Department at that time, and we opened up a case, is that what I'm trying to say?

Hicklin: Yes. You became a client of the Department.

Moritz: Yes. Thank you.

Hicklin: Or, the Commission at that time.

Moritz: Yes, it was the Commission at that time. Yes. And, there just was no help. We tried the only technology available was a large magnifying glass that would stand on a table or on the floor. That just didn't work for me. And, I remember Dave and I confronting my supervisor, saying when my 90 days was up, if we felt that I couldn't do the job, that I'd be the one to tell him, that we didn't need him to tell me that I couldn't do the job. So, he tried to make a point there for the Department and for me. When the 90 days was up, I did know that I couldn't do the job, and so I left the bank.

Oh, I think my next job...I went to work as a psych aide at Mercy Hospital, and I kind of liked that. In fact, I did like it. We did everything in patient care, other than give meds. It was very interesting. I wasn't responsible for their mental

health. The psychiatrists were the ones that had the last word, so that was kind of nice.

31:09

(End of Recording 2)

(Beginning of Recording 3)

Hicklin: Okay, let's go ahead and continue, please.

Moritz: Okay, well, somewhere along the line I forgot the fact that I had worked at the courthouse. I had gone down to...I had gone over to Des Moines to take the State Merit exam, because I needed assistance on that. I did pass that and got offered jobs all over the state, but I ended up in the Soldiers Relief Office in the courthouse. And that was kind of a neat job. It was a two-person office, and it was rather boring most of the time. And I had kids and a husband to take care of, and I tried to talk the Supervisors into making the job a part-time job. But they wouldn't do it, because it would set a precedence and they'd never be able to hire fulltime again; it would change the slot designation.

Hicklin: Yes.

Moritz: So, I must have just quit. I can't remember why, but I had no problems there, it was still in the days of typewriters and mimeograph machines and stuff like that.

So, anyway, then after I had gone to work in the psych unit and had the second detached retina, while working there, I got divorced and was kind of floundering not knowing what kind of work I was going to be able to do. And, Dave Quick mentioned the Business Enterprise

Program at the Department for the Blind, which allows a person to run their own business, and have the support of the Department, as far as advice. And, you have Business Enterprise people from all over the state you can take advice from and learn from their experience. And, they were building a new courthouse here in town, and the Department had gotten the opportunity to run the cafeteria in the new Courthouse. It sounded kind of exciting to me. I don't know what I was thinking, but that's what I did then. I went into the Business Enterprise Program and ran the courthouse [cafeteria] there for about nine years, I think, nine or ten years. I managed the Pottawattamie County Courthouse Cafeteria.

Hicklin: You made some wonderful soups, too. I remember coming, every time I came to Council Bluffs, going in there for some of your soup. That was some of the best around.

Moritz: Well, thank you. And, the cops told me I had the best coffee in town. So, what more do you want. The problem there, I developed an infection that I remember it as encephalitis, and we couldn't get rid of it. And, they finally discovered that the germ itself was residing in what they call the buckle, which was implanted during the last surgery for my detached retina. And so, in order to save my life, so to speak, they had to go in and take out that buckle. Now, the ophthalmologist was convinced that once he took out the buckle, the retina would detach again. And, retinal detachments on somebody with congenital cataracts is a little bit more hazardous than it is for a normal person, because it's kind of like a worn-out bed sheet; they can mend it in one spot, but when rotten, it tears real easily in

the next one. So, my ophthalmologist has been walking on water for years, because they pulled out the buckle, but I still haven't had another detachment. So, that was kind of miraculous, and it happened during the time I was trying to run the cafeteria. At the same time, I have arthritis really bad, and both of my hips were just absolutely degenerated to the point that I had to have hip replacement surgeries. I was 48 years old at the time, and I went in the hospital and, of course, this requires needing someone to run the cafeteria. And I gotta tell you, I don't even remember who I had. I had a couple of friends that filled in, but I'm not sure, but I had both hips done in February of 1982. And, this helped tremendously. Running the cafeteria was just very hard on the hips, because you're on your feet all the time.

Hicklin: Sure.

Moritz: So, I was so relieved of pain that I could even dance again, which was great. But, as time went on, I knew I had to get out of the business, because I just wasn't going to be able to go into retirement. So, I had been offered a job in Des Moines, with a friend that had a cafeteria, and I decided to go ahead and take that job and move to Des Moines, and possibly then be able to learn some technology and move onto an office job.

Oh, by then, computers had come into use, and blind people were able to use computers because of the screen reading technology that was coming out. And my friend, Sylvester Nemmers, was one of the first to get involved with computers. He was getting old. He said he wanted help at the cafeteria, plus he'd teach me how to use a computer. And, I knew that if I wanted to get back into office work,

secretary or anything, I'd have to use computers. So, that sounded like a good opportunity to me. Plus, it gave up the responsibility of hiring people and paying bills, and I wasn't making that much money anymore at the cafeteria. So, in actuality, the courthouse does not support a cafeteria. They don't even have one there anymore.

So, anyway, I moved to Des Moines. Well, by then I had changed Counselors twice, because after Dave Quick left and became the Program Manager of Field Operations, that's when I met Mike. And I was all ready not to like Mike, because nobody could replace Dave; nobody. Well, Mike was an absolute sweetheart, and I was very disappointed, when he felt the need to change his position, and not be our Counselor out here anymore. Well, I had been lucky twice, and that was the end of my luck. And darn, some little twerp named Bonnie Linquist came out as my Counselor, and we hit it off immediately. So, that was good. To this day we are still friends, as I am with Mike, and would be with Dave, if he were around. I haven't seen him in several years.

Bonnie then helped me find a place to live in Des Moines, and I went to work for Sylvester. I worked a little harder than I should have lifting money bags, because a lot of what I did was count money from the machines, pull out and lift the big bags of money. And so, darned if I didn't have to have another hip replacement, so again, there I was now. I had learned a little bit about computers, and still wasn't out of the business was I?

Hicklin: Not quite.

Moritz: And so, we decided it was time, Bonnie and I decided it was time, for me to become a client again and see if the Department could help me find a better job. In the meantime, Iowa State had given the Department a grant for a part-time worker to be what they called an Assistive Technology Clerk, and this was to be someone that would gather information about assistive technology. This was higher tech than what they carried in Aids and Devices. We called that Aids and Appliances back then. And, they carried magnifying glasses and talking clocks and things like that. The Assistive Technology Clerk was to delve into the computer products available. We were into CCTV's at the time, which is closed circuit television. So, I applied for that part-time position, which would actually have paid me better than what Sylvester was paying. But he was retiring anyway. And so, that worked out that all of these things all happened at once, that I got hired at the Department, although I was being paid by Iowa City, and we were doing inventory at Sylvester's place. So, that's how I went to work at the Department.

Hicklin: Did that part-time position then eventually become fulltime, or?

Moritz: Yes. I was fortunately...I started out really slow, because it was all new to all of us. There was only one other technology person in the Voc. Rehab, part of the Department; which we knew we had to make that better, because without assistive technology, a lot of blind people wouldn't be working. And so, I was fortunate enough, I guess, to have the chutzpah, or whatever, to go above and beyond what Iowa City had asked me to do. Consequently,

the Department decided that they would hire me part-time also, so to speak. So, I was working fulltime and being paid half by the University and half by the Department. Now, I didn't even know when that ended, because I kept sending...to the day I left, sending reports to Iowa City, because I had to report very detailed on how many calls or how many visits I had from every county, what they wanted to talk about, what kind of information I gave them. I had to keep very detailed records. And, at some point during that, the grant did not get renewed, and I didn't even know it, because the transition of it was so smooth. When they were hiring, what they called the younger tech team, I went down and talked to Creig about this, and oh, he says, "You've been fulltime for a long time on the Department payroll."

But anyway, that job was just marvelous. It was a piece of experimenting with all of the computer technology that was out there, not only the screen readers; the speech, which there are many manufacturers of those, and each one of them requires different commands to make them work. I also got into the screen enlargement programs, which were kind of frowned on at first, and so was the CCTV. There was a time that the Department did not buy CCTV's, but the philosophy finally gradually changed on that to the point now, if I had had a CCTV at Omaha National, I probably would have retired from there. But there are a lot of jobs that the CCTV is just, it was for me. I sat it next to my computer monitor, and I went through all the catalogs to see what was out there, and how much it was. And I had created databases with all this in, so that if someone called and wanted to know what do I think is the best and how much it is, and where do they get it, then I would have all that information at my fingertips on the computer.

Now, I did forget then that just prior to going to work at the bank, I mean, at the Department. I had gotten contacted by the University of Iowa Medical Department, that they were doing a study on something called Stickler's syndrome; that's the doctor's name. I believe he's from Minnesota. And, they had gotten my name through my father, who lived in Florida. And they were doing studies on my mother's family, which I did not know at all. They lived in Southern Illinois, and I had never...I had visited them maybe two or three times in my lifetime. I knew that my grandfather was blind. My Uncle Ralph was blind, and he was one of the best mechanics in Salem. My aunt was partially blind, and we ended up reconnecting and talking pretty regularly up until the day she died, which was a couple of years ago. But, I thought that was so miraculous that Karen and I and John, of course, had lived in so many different parts of the country, and here we were in Iowa, where they were doing a study on this syndrome.

And so, they came to Des Moines, and set up their equipment and stuff at Karen's apartment. At that time, she had a much nicer apartment than I did. And so, she was making more money than I was, too. And so, this just bowls me over that I have that syndrome, Stickler's Syndrome. My daughter, Karen does not have that. She has the congenital cataracts, which came from my dad's side of the family, but my son, John, who had never had eye problems that we knew of, he wore glasses and that was it. My son, John, has Stickler's Syndrome. Now, this is the cause of most of my joint problems, my hearing loss, which at this time I have profound hearing loss. I wear two hearing aids. My son, John, was born with a club foot and a cleft palate, and we never connected that to the fact that I had a cleft palate

when I was born. And all of that is part of Stickler's Syndrome. Now, John recently has had a detached retina, but at least now we know why. And, that was in 1990, I believe, that we found that out; that both of my children inherited from me, one from my mother's side and one from my dad's side. But if anybody, we would have thought that Karen had it, but Karen has no other problems other than she can't see.

Hicklin: Is the treatment for the Stickler's better now, so that John has a better chance of...

Moritz: Yes.

Hicklin: Staying well, or staying treated, at least?

Moritz: Yes. Because number one, his detached retina...See, many of us thought the detached retinas that I had was caused from the childhood surgeries for the cataracts.

Hicklin: Right.

Moritz: Sylvester Nemmers, he had had congenital cataracts and was totally blind, and others in his family had had the congenital cataracts, and that's what the theory was. And remember I went back to that rotten sheet thing, you know. Now the difference then between what John has, is he's never had those needlings as a child. So, his is a healthy retina back there, so that when he had detached retina laser surgery, it healed it right up. And, he may have others, but as you say, the treatments are better than they

used to be, so that's good. And, I'm afraid to say that he's also passed that on, even though they said that he had a very small chance of ever passing it on. He does have, at least, two children with Stickler's, but I don't believe they have serious problems at this point.

Hicklin: Yes.

Moritz: So, I continue to be very active in the consumer groups. I believe they're very important. I have written many letters. I have talked to legislators many times on behalf of saving the Department, for one thing, or the Commission as it used to be called, also. Every time they start rattling around about including us with the general rehab. agency, it's something that we have to get up-in-arms about. I believe, that the consumers have been the ones to help make a lot of the laws that all the young people take for granted now. And, it takes all the consumers to stand up for ourselves, and we need to back the Department in what they're doing, in addition to the Voc. Rehab. They do have other departments in the Department, so to speak. But, the Voc. Rehab., I believe, is extremely important because it allows us to become taxpayers and earn our own way. I know the taxi driver here wanted to know when Karen was getting ready to move overseas, what the government thought about that, and I didn't understand his question, until he said something, and I realized he thought we were on some sort of disability or something. And, I said, "Not all blind people are on disability. A lot of us earn too much money, and we're taxpayers."

Hicklin: Yes, working to pay taxes.

Moritz: Yes, we're taxpayers. And, I believe a lot of people still don't know we're out of the dark ages. But most people do.

I retired from the Department about 10 years ago, and decided to move back to Council Bluffs, because at the time, Karen had gotten a church in Omaha, and my son lived in Council Bluffs, so I felt it was the thing to do. And, then I thought if Karen moves on, that's her business. And, in the meantime, she moved to Lincoln, and worked at the University of Nebraska for a while. Now, you see where she is, so.

Hicklin: Well, she was...wasn't she in the ministry somewhere in Des Moines for a period of time? I remember going to a funeral that she officiated.

Moritz: She's always done weddings and funerals, and she did that while she was in Des Moines. She did work as a part-time; she's licensed to do that whether she has a church or not. And, while she was, oh, I don't think I said anything about her becoming a Counselor at the Department.

When she hit one of those ceilings, she was in North Carolina, and if you weren't a married, white man, you just weren't getting anywhere. And, she was offered a job as a Counselor in Des Moines, and that's when she moved back to Des Moines. But at the time, she still became Associate Pastor at, I really have forgot what church it was. But that just wasn't her thing. She got a church then, in a little town, Guthrie Center, but then was offered a job as chaplain at Lutheran Hospital, and the opportunity to go on with her

supervisory training, which is what she had run into in North Carolina; not being able to go on with that. And so, she did do funerals and weddings and other things. So, when she came back to Des Moines, and went to church there, and went to work at Lutheran, that's when, then, they did all their consolidating of hospitals. And, I can't remember the big brouhaha, but she was the lowest on the totem pole there, so she lost that job. But, that's when she got the church in Omaha, then.

And, that was about time for me to retire, so that's when I moved back here. And, here I am. I've had to move. I did live upstairs first, which as Mike knows, I don't do stairs well, but I was doing okay for a while, but last year it got to where I couldn't get up and down the steps very well. And, now I'm on the same floor with the laundry, so I can just...I have to use a walker now. I believe I've torn my oldest hip loose, but after all it's going on 30 years old, and I should be seeing about that. But, since I need the walker, I'm able to get around a lot better than...And, I just drag my laundry around the corner. Now, have I covered everything you think?

Hicklin: I think so, very well.

Moritz: At one point, I remember when Ken and I were thinking about getting divorced, but hadn't quite gotten to that point yet. He wanted to move out to this town out in central Nebraska called Elwood, which is a spot in the road. It's a one grocery store town, and I absolutely refused to take Karen out-of-state, because of the Department. Now, he had found out that if a husband moves and the wife won't come with him that he can file for desertion. And, that is

very true, unless the wife has a legitimate reason for not going.

30:00

Moritz: I went to a lawyer, and I explained about the Iowa Department for the Blind, and there was no other like it in the country, and that I wasn't taking Karen out of this state. And, yeah it was decided that I had a good reason for staying here, so.

Hicklin: Well, it's worked out well.

Moritz: Yes, it has.

Hicklin: Is there anything else that you can think of?

Moritz: Well, and then I want to mention the library. Oh my God, I don't know what I'd do without books. And now that we have the digital, and we can just download directly; it's just absolutely marvelous. And, the Iowa Department oversees the National Library, and I think that speaks well for how special the Iowa Department is. And, I still think they're doing a marvelous job.

Hicklin: Do you download books through the National BARD software, is that it?

Moritz: Yes. I just went out and did one before you came, because people on the talk shows today were talking about a new movie that's out, and evidently everybody read the book called "Help," and I have not read it. I don't believe

that I would have, because having grown up in the middle of the civil rights fight, and living in the South, I was on the wrong side, so to speak. I kind of don't always read books about those years unless they're recommended. So, I went out on BARD, and I typed in "The Help," and here it came. So, I just downloaded that one and will read it, as I get done with my Dean Koontz.

Hicklin: I understand that there is also eBooks available if you have an iPhone, and Apple iPhone that you can, I think, it costs a small amount of money; but you can download books into your Apple iPhone, and then the latest phone has speech built into it in an app.

Moritz: Um-hum.

Hicklin: And, you can, if you find books that you can't find through the library service, newer books; sometimes you can go through the eBooks, which seems amazing to me that technology has changed so much.

Moritz: It is. It is, just since I have retired. When I first started with the Department, we were just struggling so much trying to make it accessible for counselors and secretaries, etc. We were still back in the DOS days, and when we started getting into Windows, all the speech programs were so new, and so flawed. But, every six months something would be different. And, number one, I was old enough to retire, and my poor old body told me I had too; but the technology moves so fast. And, part of my job was tech support for the whole state. And I'm not just talking the computers. I'm talking electronic notepad, etc.,

the Braille ‘N Speak and Type ‘N Speak, and what have you. And, I not only was trying to learn everything new that came out, because they did, literally, every six months come up with additions; I can’t think of the right word. Versions of something new, you know. And, I not only had to learn all of that, I had to remember all of the old stuff, because many of the clients are like me now. I do not get a new computer every time I turn around, and so what I’m using is kind of outdated. And so, many of our clients were that way, and they were using things way back in the past. So, I not only had to remember, you know, all of the old ways to do things, I had to learn all of the new ways, and my brain was getting addled. It’s just difficult to remember all of that.

Hicklin: I certainly relate to that.

Moritz: Yeah. So, it was time that I leave. And it has, technology, has just moved so fast that I do not even have a new cell phone. A few months ago the Department came down, the tech team and gave us nice demonstrations of how the new cell phones were working. But, I don’t really have a need for one. I still have an old one that Karen gave me when I first moved back here, and it was mainly because she and I were running all over these two towns, and many times we’d have to change when and where we were meeting each other. So, now I use it to call a cab and that’s about it. And I have my son and his wife are on speed dial on my old phone, but I can’t see a thing on it. He has to delete any voice mail, etc., but I don’t feel the need to buy another one. I just wouldn’t use it. And, now I’m just getting out less and less. As long as I can call a cab and get home, or call John if I need him, why that’s it. But, it is amazing.

And I don't know how anybody keeps up with everything it does, or they do.

Hicklin: Well, thank you very much for your time, Doris.

Moritz: Yeah. Probably took me a long time to go down memory lane there, huh?

Hicklin: Lots of years of experience.

Moritz: Well, thank God we found the Department. That's all I can say.

Hicklin: Thank you, again.

Moritz: Oh, anytime.

37:25

(End of Recording 3)

(End of Interview)

Jo Ann Slayton

8/12-2011